



**STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building – 1111 Washington Street SE – Olympia, WA

**MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (MDNS)**

**Name of Proposal:** # 12-012 WOOTEN WILDLIFE AREA FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION PROJECT

**Description of Proposal:**

The proposal is for two early action restoration projects and to introduce the concept of a Floodplain Management Plan for the Wooten W.A. The projects are The Quonset Hut/Bunkhouse Removal and Floodplain Restoration Project and The Tucannon Large Woody Debris (LWD) Restoration Project. The Quonset Hut/Bunkhouse Removal is the demolition and removal of two old buildings located in the Tucannon River floodplain. After removing the buildings the project site will be restored to native grasses and woody vegetation (trees and shrubs). The LWD restoration is a continuation of restoration efforts that began following the School Fire (2005). The fire burned large reaches of riparian and the Tucannon River in those reaches has been altered over the past 100 years, resulting in a river channel that has been simplified, confined, and disconnected from its' floodplain. It has been determined that restoring Large Wood structure to the channel will promote stream habitat complexity and floodplain connectivity, with the intention of improving conditions for riparian regeneration. The LWD material is being donated by the USFS Umatilla National Forest and the project will incorporate helicopter placement techniques.

Washington State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife is currently developing a Floodplain Management Plan for the Wooten Wildlife Area. The scope for the plan is attached to this SEPA application, and WDFW is planning on developing another phase of the current SEPA to cover the Wooten Wildlife Area Floodplain Management Plan. The plan will be written in 2012.

**The proponent shall incorporate the following mitigation measures into the project:**

1. Riparian vegetation will be planted complimentary to LWD structures to improve stream conditions and to mitigate for project disturbances. Additionally, we will conduct 3 years of monitoring and maintenance for vegetation planted for erosion control and mitigation for the project.
2. More than 10,000 sq./ft. of impervious materials will be removed from the floodplain. Those areas will be restored to native grasses and shrubs.
3. The LWD Restoration project was designed to utilize a helicopter technique to build LWD structures specifically to minimize impacts to the stream and riparian habitat. Using a

helicopter adds considerable costs over convention construction, 57 of the 61 LWD structures will be placed in stream using helicopter placement techniques to eliminate impacts to riparian, stream bank, and stream habitat throughout most the 2 mile project reach.

4. The bottom end of the LWD project will incorporate conventional construction of 4 LWD Engineered Log Jams. These structures are designed to act as “regulators” for LWD movement through the project reach. These structures will reduce infrastructure risks associated with large scale LWD movement during flood events.
5. Best management practices for implementation of the habitat restoration projects will be strictly followed.

Best management practices:

1. Projects will be constructed during the In-Water Work Window to minimize impacts on fish life.
2. Trees were selected for the project to reduce impacts to transportation/traffic and increase project safety. The area that the trees have been selected from does not cross any roads, the trees will be hoisted from the Umatilla National Forest at Willow Springs and flown directly to the Tucannon River.
3. Minimize the need and number of access routes to the river for project construction. Access areas are designed to have little impact to habitat and disturbances to existing vegetation will be minimized by observing best management practices during construction.
4. Dewatering required for installation of the Engineered Log Jams (ELJ) will be carried out in accordance with the best management practices for water control. This includes pumping turbid water to a location suitable for natural infiltration and approved by the Project Biologist and Engineer and in compliance with any permits and regulations.
5. Native vegetation (grasses, shrubs, and trees will be restored in areas disturbed by construction. The areas disturbed by construction include construction access routes, spoil pile removals, LWD assemblies, and ELJ structures.
6. Water and sediment control structures will be left in place until all construction activities within the river have been completed and any temporary surface erosion control measures are in place. Once construction is complete, these components will be broken down and removed by hand, and the rest of the project area will be decommissioned before leaving the project area.
7. Surface erosion control during construction is an important turbidity control measure for the project. Silt fencing around the perimeter of areas where vegetation is removed will be established to capture sediment and delineate the construction disturbance limits. During project area decommissioning, straw mulch will be placed to minimize erosion of materials as vegetation becomes re-established. Silt fencing will be removed by hand once temporary surface erosion control measures are in place or vegetation is re-established in the disturbed areas.
8. Water control during construction is recognized as the most critical turbidity control measure for the project. Installation of the 4 constructed log jams 2 ELJ's and 2 Floodplain Debris Catchers (FDC) will require excavation below the water table, and turbid water will be generated. Turbid water will be pumped from the project sites to a location suitable for natural filtration that is approved by the Project Engineer, Project Biologist, and in compliance with permits. Water would be pumped from the excavation area into an

infiltration area. The infiltration area should be located on the floodplain to minimize the potential for overland flow back into the river and to prevent damage to sensitive habitat (wetlands and alcoves). Infiltration rates into the floodplain will be significant and we expect that only a minimum amount of turbid water pumped onto the floodplain will not be infiltrated. If the infiltration capacity is exceeded, overland flow will be routed over existing vegetation to encourage suspended sediment deposition before flowing back to the river. Additionally, any required excavation will be conducted within temporary gravel berms, silt curtains, or other temporary flow separation method to minimize the dispersion of turbid water into the active channel. WDOE guidelines for water quality in the State Water Quality Certification for the project will be implemented.

9. The following Best Management Practices will be implemented for spill prevention during refueling: Each piece of machinery will be checked daily for leaks and any repairs will be done before work in or near water, All vehicle staging, cleaning, maintenance, refueling, and fuel storage will take place above the ordinary high water line in an approved staging area that is 150 feet or more from any water body in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations and permit conditions, the driver/operator must be trained in spill prevention, cleanup measures, and emergency procedures, Spill containment and countermeasures will be maintained at all locations where refueling occurs; materials include non-water absorbents capable of absorbing 15 gallons of diesel fuel and drip pans, and power generators used during construction, will be placed away from the river channel and within a spill containment unit lined with absorbent materials.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

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#### **Location of Proposal WDFW Wooten Wildlife Area:**

Building removal: NW ¼ of Section 4, Township 10 North, Range 41 East, Columbia County.

60 large wood instream replacement sites: Sections 3, 10, 15 Township 9 North, Range 41 East. Columbia County

**Lead Agency:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law<sup>1</sup> does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this mitigated determination of nonsignificance (MDNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this MDNS according to state rules.<sup>2</sup> We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the MDNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are

invited to comment on this proposal or MDNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. This means we must receive your comments by: **March 30, 2012.**

**Method of Comment:**

The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to [SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov)
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

**Responsible Official:** Bob Zeigler

**Position/Title:** SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

**Address:** 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>. Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions about this MDNS or the details of the proposal, contact Bob Zeigler at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call him at (360) 902-2578.

**DATE OF ISSUE:** March 15, 2012

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 12 -012. dns